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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003796

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI MP AND ADVISOR TO PRIME MINISTER DISCUSSES
MOVEMENT ON RAMADAN AGREEMENT AND OTHER SECURITY ISSUES
WITH AMBASSADOR

REF: A. BAGHDAD 3726
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 3693

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Sami al-Askari, Council of Representatives (CoR) member and confidante of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki told the Ambassador that the leaders who signed the Ramadan agreement had agreed on members for the central committee and had begun to discuss the issue of checkpoints. The Ambassador emphasized to al-Askari the importance of getting broad buy-in from the political blocs to move forward with plans to dissolve the militias. Al-Askari took the initiative to correct a "misunderstanding" about a remark he made in the CoR on forming a committee to ensure legislation was in accordance with Islam. END SUMMARY.

Ramadan Agreement: Central Committee Formed

[1](#)2. (C) In an October 8 meeting, al-Askari, an independent member of the Shi'a coalition, told the Ambassador that the leaders who signed on October 2 the four point agreement on security, now known as the Ramadan agreement, had met again on October 6 and agreed on the following members for the "central committee" (ref B): Hadi al-Amri (UIC: Badr); Hassan al-Ruba'ie (UIC: Sadrist); Jaber Khalifa (UIC: Fadhila); Abdul Kareem al-Samaraee (Tawafuq: IIP); Ahmed Soleman Jameel Alwani (Tawafuq: IIP); Emad Mohammed Ali (Tawafuq: IPC); Moustafa al-Heti (Hewar); and two Kurds, one Iraqiyya representative, and one person from the Prime Minister's office to be named later. Al-Askari told the Ambassador that the signers had also discussed the issue of checkpoints and agreed to make sure there was a balance between Shi'a and Sunnis in the Iraqi police and army units manning the checkpoints. According to al-Askari, the signers planned to meet again later in the week and were going to focus their efforts on Baghdad. He said he could not predict when the agreement would produce "effects on the ground."

Reconciliation, Militias, and Resolution 1546

[1](#)3. (C) Asked by the Ambassador for his general assessment of the security situation, al-Askari noted some positive steps but not much overall improvement. Al-Askari mentioned the Anbar tribal conference (septel) held October 7 as one such step, but confirmed that a number of important sheikhs did not attend because of the Iraqi Islamic Party's sponsorship of the conference. Al-Askari agreed with the Ambassador on the importance of leaving the door open for these sheikhs to join the process. In terms of the reconciliation process,

al-Askari confirmed that the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor Muwaffaq al-Rubai'e had informed him "some time ago" that he and Rubai'e might meet with Sunni militia groups seeking reconciliation, but that he had not participated in such meetings to date. Al-Askari then shared his concern about two places he said terrorists were establishing themselves due to a lack of coalition and Iraqi security forces presence: Ibrahim bin Ali (near Abu Ghraib) and Saba' Bour (near Taji). The Ambassador said he would make sure these concerns were discussed at the next Ministerial Council for National Security meeting.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador noted that the Prime Minister had charged the Minister of State for CoR Affairs Safa al-Safi for developing a plan to disarm, demobilize, and reintegrate (DDR) militias (ref A) but stressed the importance that the plan have broad buy-in from all political blocs. Al-Askari affirmed that at this point al-SaFi was the government's point person on DDR but agreed with the Ambassador that the CoR would probably play a role in developing modifications to existing legislation.

¶5. (C) Al-Askari raised the issue of UN Security Council Resolution 1546, outlining three possibilities: extending it without modification, which he ruled out; asking the multinational forces (MNF-I) to withdraw immediately, which, he observed, would create a security vacuum; and amending the resolution to change the role and authorities of the coalition forces. The Ambassador replied that the coalition welcomed a discussion about MNF-I's role in the context of Iraq taking more security responsibilities but emphasized that negotiating a bilateral MNF-I/GOI agreement was a far more practical way to proceed, rather than seeking to amend the resolution itself.

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Legislation and Islam: Correcting a Misunderstanding

¶6. (C) Al-Askari told the Ambassador he wanted to set the record straight on a comment he had made the previous week in the CoR. According to al-Askari, a contact of his in Washington told him that people in Washington believed he was moving to support the concept of wilayat al-faqih by asking for a review of CoR legislation to ensure it was in accordance with Islam. Al-Askari noted to the Ambassador that he had not proposed this idea but instead was reacting to a call by the CoR Speaker to form a committee to ensure CoR legislation was in accordance with Islam. Al-Askari said that he did not believe CoR members were qualified to render this judgment and instead had proposed that, should the CoR proceed down this path, it should appoint a committee of three external experts from the different schools (mathabs) of Islam predominant in Iraq to offer a non-binding advisory opinion. The Ambassador noted that the constitution called for all legislation to be in accordance with democracy and human rights as well as Islam. Al-Askari agreed that, should the CoR vet laws from the perspective of Islam, committees of legal and human rights experts should also render advisory opinions on the accordance of potential laws with principles of democracy and human rights, respectively. (Note: Al-Askari's version of this incident is consistent with EmbOffs' notes from the October 2 CoR session in that al-Askari did not raise the subject himself and proposed an external committee in lieu of a CoR committee if necessary. End note.)

COMMENT

¶7. (C) As a CoR member with strong connections to the Prime Minister and the Dawa Party, al-Askari's perspective on security issues is a valuable one. He seemed confident in

talking about a range of issues related to security, including militias, the Ramadan agreement, UNSCR 1546, and de-Baathification, and he did not appear to exaggerate his role. The directness with which he sought to clarify the "misunderstanding" on his view of the role of Islam in the legislative process shows how closely attuned he is to opinion in Washington. END COMMENT.
KHALILZAD